

Student Organization Advisor Manual



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Dear Student Organization Advisor,

Thank you for your service in advising students participating in a Southern Miss student organization.

This manual is designed to be a helpful guide to resources and practices that can assist you as you advise your student organization.

University faculty and staff members are an important part of encouraging students' participation in activities and organizations. And we appreciate that you have taken this responsibility. We feel strongly that the learning that takes place outside of the classroom can be just as important in the development of a student as learning taking place inside the classroom. Experiences in student groups can lead to advanced critical thinking skills, greater interest in the well-being of others, self-confidence and increased decision make abilities among many others.

In addition to this manual, please note our Policy and Procedures Manual which can be found on our website. This guide is updated each year with university policies and procedures for holding events on campus. It is imperative that student organizations understand and follow these policies when planning an event. We appreciate your help in becoming familiar with the manual and advocating for your group to follow the rules and procedures outlined in the manual so they can hold successful events on campus this year.

Thank you for advising a student organization on campus. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have further questions or need additional support throughout the year.

Southern Miss to the Top!

The Office of Leadership and Student Involvement

Location

We are located in the Union Complex in the Student Activities Hub, room 110.

Website

www.usm.edu/lsi

Email

lsi@usm.edu

Advisor Expectations

Why should I advise a student organization?

Advising provides you with an opportunity to help facilitate the growth and development of student leaders. It's a fun way to get to know students outside of your classroom or office. You will be able to see the students you work with become successful in their organization's work, and see knowledge from class used in their everyday lives.

What will the group I'm working with expect from me?

When establishing your relationship with the student leaders, it may be helpful to have a conversation about the level of involvement you expect from one another. You have the opportunity to create the relationship you want with the student organization in which you're working. Other potential expectations:

- Assistance with any financial decision-making
- To learn about the constitution and organization's culture
- Attendance at programs and events
- Communication via email and in person (office hours?)

What can I expect from the group I advise?

In general, you can expect the organization to report:

- Communicate meeting agendas, programs, and event updates
- Attend planned meetings
- Keep in communication with you (weekly meetings, emails, etc.)

How do we determine my level of involvement?

The level of involvement is dependent upon you and the student leaders' needs, wants, and expectations. If you want to attend events, your role should be one of support and encouragement, not supervision. To help maintain a consistent relationship, here are some suggestions:

- It is up to the student leaders in the organization to run the meeting. As an advisor, you should not be expected to run the meeting or the organization.
- At the beginning of each year or when the leadership in the organization changes, you will want to revisit the level of involvement and expectations between you and the organization's executive board members.
- Be available and on hand to participate in times of transition and celebration.

Advising Roles

Mentor- a mentor will have a basic understanding of student needs and perspectives, a desire to challenge students intellectually and emotionally while providing support to meet the challenge, and the ability to listen to students' verbal and nonverbal communication.

Team Builder- When new officers are elected or new members join the organization, you may need to take the initiative in turning the students from individuals with separate goals and expectations into a team. Team building is important because it enhances the relationships of the students between one another and the advisor. Positive relationships help the organization succeed and to work through conflicts and difficult times.

Conflict Mediator- Inevitably, students are going to join the organization with different agendas, goals, and ideas about how things should function and the direction they should be taking. When working with students who have come in to conflict, it may be necessary to meet with them and have them discuss their issues with each other. In many cases, it may be necessary to remind them that they both want what is in the best interest of the organization. Ask them how they think they can work together, point out the organization's mission, and ask how their conduct is helping the group achieve its mission.

Educator- As an advisor, your role of educator will often come through the role modeling of behavior, guiding the student in reflection of their actions, and being there to answer questions. One of the most difficult actions to take as an advisor is to do nothing, but sometimes this can be the most important action of all. Allow the students to make their decisions even if they do not agree with your ideas. Sometimes, students will succeed; other times, they may fail. The key is to return to the role of the reflective agent and give the students a safe place to reflect on their experiences.

Motivator- As an advisor, you may have to motivate students to excel and to carry out their plans and achieve their goals. Some students are easily discouraged and at the first sign of difficulty they may want to quit. You will need to be their "cheerleader" to keep them excited about all of the potential successes they will experience. You can motivate students through the recognition of their efforts, appealing to their desire to create change, and to connecting their experiences here at the University to the experiences they will have in the community.

Advising Do's

1. Encourage attendance at student activities sponsored meetings and events. This includes attending a Policy Review session each year as well as workshops put on by our office to develop leadership characteristics.
2. Provide students with resources for the training, such as ice breakers, important topics of discussion like values and ethics, ideas for downtime, etc.
2. Allow the group to succeed, and allow the group to fail. Offer support when necessary, but also allow them to make mistakes and learn from them.
3. At the beginning of each semester, as well as periodically, develop clear expectations about the role of the advisor and your relationship to the organization.
4. Keep your sense of humor and enthusiasm. Share creative and alternative suggestions and provide feedback for activities planned by students.
5. Learn what the students want to get out of the organization. Support them in their journey in doing so.
6. Ask officers to assist with procedural matters. Be knowledgeable of the organization's purpose and constitution, upcoming deadlines, ongoing goals, national, state, or regional expectations or by- laws, and help give feedback.
7. Represent the group and its interests in staff and faculty meetings. Reach out to other advisors or departments for assistance.
8. Ask the executive board to orient new officers and members to the history and purpose of the group and help them to build upon it. Help members look toward the future by developing long-term goals and communicating those plans to future members.

Adapted from <http://www.myacpa.org/comm/student/documents/acpaadvisormanual.pdf>, p. 5

Advising Don'ts

1. Be the leader or "run" the meeting.
2. Say I told you so.
3. Impose your own bias.
4. Close communication.
5. Tell the group what to do, or do the work of the president or other members of the executive board.
6. Take ownership for the group, be the "parent," or the smothering administrator.
7. Miss group meetings or functions.
8. Be afraid to let the group try new ideas.
9. Allow the organization to become a one-person organization.
10. Assume the group handles everything okay and doesn't need you.

Adapted from <http://www.myacpa.org/comm/student/documents/acpaadvisormanual.pdf>, p. 6

Having a Successful Healthy Group

Seven Characteristics of a Successful Organization

1. Organization members know each other well.
2. Members are involved in defining organizational purposes.
3. Members are used to help generate ideas.
4. There is a commitment to group decision making.
5. Skills, resources, and liabilities of the organization and community are identified.
6. Systematic problem solving techniques are used.
7. The organization effectively communicates itself and its purpose to members and the student body.

Symptoms of a Healthy and Unhealthy Group

A group is healthy when:

1. All members feel comfortable saying what they think.
2. Decisions are worked through until a general consensus of agreement is reached.
3. Well-informed members contribute their ideas in the area of their competence.
4. The whole group handles questions that concern the whole group.
5. Major issues get major time.
6. Major issues invoke mature approaches to change.
7. Minor issues are settled with the attention they deserve.
8. Decisions reached through participation are final and satisfactory.
9. Members really understand one another's ideals, plans, and proposals.
10. The group carries forward in the performance of tasks and the achievement of goals.
11. The group is solution oriented.
12. Rewards and feedback are shared among the entire group.

A group is unhealthy when:

1. A few members do all the talking.
2. Members mumble agreement.
3. Competent people sit by silently.
4. Decision making is quickly referred to committees.
5. New people with good ideas are not listened to.
6. Minor issues consume the majority of the group's time.
7. Minor and simple issues make people angry and resentful.
8. Major issues are passed over.
9. The same subjects, supposedly settled, keep coming up again.
10. Quick judgments are passed on issues people do not understand.
11. Members subjectively talk about people in a scapegoat manner.
12. The group accomplishes little in absence of the leader.
13. The group avoids change.
14. Rewards and criticism are concentrated on a few people.

Adapted from the Student Organization Advisor Manual at Wright State University

Advisor's Self- Evaluation Checklist

Please answer the following questions as they relate to your role as a student organization advisor.

Fill in the blanks in front of each question using the following scale:

5 = all the time 4 = most of the time 3 = some of the time

2 = almost never 1 = never

- _____ I actively provide motivation and encouragement to members.
- _____ I know the goals of the organization.
- _____ I know the group's members.
- _____ I attend regularly scheduled executive board meetings.
- _____ I attend regularly scheduled organizational meetings.
- _____ I meet regularly with the officers of the organization.
- _____ I attend the organization's special events.
- _____ I assist with the orientation and training of new officers.
- _____ I help provide continuity for the organization.
- _____ I confront the negative behavior of members.
- _____ I understand the principles of group development.
- _____ I understand how students grow and learn.
- _____ I understand the principles that lead to orderly meetings.
- _____ I have read the group's constitution and by-laws.
- _____ I recommend and encourage without imposing my ideas and preferences.
- _____ I monitor the organization's financial records.
- _____ I understand the principles of good fund raising.
- _____ I understand how the issues of diversity affect the organization.
- _____ I attend conferences with the organization's members.
- _____ I know the steps to follow in developing a program.
- _____ I can identify what members have learned by participating in the organization.
- _____ I know where to find assistance when I encounter problems I cannot solve.

Advisor/Student Evaluation and Feedback Tool

Please take 15-20 minutes to share your thoughts on the questions and statements listed below. Your feedback is valuable to my professional development.

Please use a scale of 5-1 to rate your answers, 5 being the best score.

1) I am satisfied with the amount of time our advisor spends with our group. 5 4 3 2 1
Comments:

2) I am satisfied with the quality of time our advisor spends with our group. 5 4 3 2 1
Comments:

3) I am satisfied with the amount of information our advisor shares with our group.
5 4 3 2 1
Comments:

4) I am satisfied with the quality of information our advisor shares with our group.
5 4 3 2 1
Comments:

5) Our advisor is familiar with the goals of our group. 5 4 3 2 1
Comments:

6) Our advisor advises our group in a way consistent with our goals. 5 4 3 2 1
Comments:

7) Our advisor adjusts his/her advising style to meet our needs. 5 4 3 2 1
Comments:

8) Our advisor is a good listener. 5 4 3 2 1
Comments:

9) Our advisor understands the dynamics of our group. 5 4 3 2 1
Comments:

10) Our advisor role models balance and healthy living. 5 4 3 2 1
Comments:

11) Our advisor challenges me to think. 5 4 3 2 1
Comments:

12) Our advisor allows me room to make and execute decisions. 5 4 3 2 1
Comments:



Quick Sheet for Leadership and Student Involvement

- ❖ Organizations are required to register each year to maintain active status with our office. That form is called the Organization Information Form (OIF) and is typically open for registration from late April until early September each year.
- ❖ All student organization presidents and at least one other officer of the organization is required to attend a Student Organization Orientation at the start of each year.
- ❖ Visit our website www.usm.edu/lsi for access to forms and information for student organizations to request space for meetings and events on campus.
- ❖ If organization events will have money exchange or other factors that make it considered high-risk or a campus liability, UPD officers might be required. They cost \$38 an hour with a 3-hour minimum (\$114 total). This is set up at a pre-event meeting with the facility or LSI at least 2-3 weeks before the date of the event.
- ❖ The sign policy is strictly enforced throughout campus –read the policy before making and/or copying any signs.
- ❖ Fundraising on campus should not compete with any other campus vendor/entity and should have an educational or philanthropic purpose only.
- ❖ Gambling and gambling terminology is prohibited on campus.
- ❖ Update your organization's information with LSI immediately after any change in officers or advisor. The form is available on our website called Changes and Updates form.

For all other questions, please contact Leadership and Student Involvement at 601.266.4403 or email us at LSI@usm.edu.

*Throughout the year policies and procedures may change.
Please visit www.usm.edu/lsi the most current version of the policies.